

[J. H. Yardley]

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Folk Stuff - Range Lore

Range-lore

Elizabeth Doyle

San Angelo, Texas.

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RANGE-LORE

When about 17 years of age J. H. Yardley of Mertzon, Texas, came from Grayson County, Texas, and settled near Colorado City, Texas. He was about 18 years old when he joined up with the late Fayette Tankereley's outfit near Tankersley, Texas. (Mr. Tankersley died two days after this interview).

"We never had a cross word or the slightest misunderstanding, believe it or not, the whole 45 years I worked for him," related Mr. Yardley. C12- Texas 2 "Most of that time I was foreman and handled millions of dollars for Mr. Tankersley. I placed his money in the bank, paid off the hands, and kept out my own. We just happened to be two square shooters who got together, which proves further that doing the right thing pays best in the long run.

"I'm just knockin' around my bachelor's quarters here now, tryin' to kill a little time. Guess I lived in the saddle too long. Anyway, I havn't been able to even get on a horse in a year now, since that serious operation I had last year.

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"Mr Tankersley and I stayed with it too close and too long I guess, for they took him to the Temple hospital, too, a few days ago and I'm afraid he ain't a-comin' back like I did. I was over to see him yesterday and the nurse told me he just needed rest. Rest! Maybe that's what all us old boys are needin'; anyway, I'm a feelin' those cold rainy nights in my bones now, when we use to spread our bed roll out over a bunch of cat-claws, tryin' to keep off the wet ground. Sometimes we had a tarp over us and sometimes we didn't and we would be in one place one night and another the next.

"The bed roll offered a favorite means of carrying out our Kangaroo Court sentences. When a tenderfoot committed the usual and unusual errors he was bent down across a bed roll and given the leggin's. We poured it 3 on one smart aleck once and he started raisin' a rough house with us all, so we just up's with him and takes him down to the river and pitched him in, clothes and all, and told him to swim or drown. Most of the time we tried to be civil even to new comers but when a fellow kicked back too much he just got a double dose.

"A cowboy's outfit consisted of his bed roll, his saddle which usually cost around \$50.00, chaps, spurs, and a good stetson hat. The hat was never supposed to cost under \$10.00.

"We were going up the trail to Kansas once with about 1,000 head and thought we were going to make the entire trip without a stampede but on our fourth night out a severe thunderstorm with lots of lightning came up. We watched the cattle as they began to stir and mill. That was where I saw a sight that lots of people give the lie, and that was lightning playing up and down the cows' horns, then running up and dropping off the end of the horns in big balls of fire. This didn't happen a great many times before the cattle broke away in mad fright. We ran them two days and nights and that is one of the few times that I rubbed tobacco spit in my eyes to keep awake.

"I don't think I could ever have made it on that trip if I hadn't been riding ny big brown horse I called I. X. He was more like a human than a horse, and wasn't 4 afraid to go right in after

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anything until I roped it. Some of the biggest and wildest old cows and steers of the range were easily handled by me with his help.

"I roped one immense steer on this run I was speaking of, and old I. X. set his forefeet in the ground and held him while I got down and got my hat I had lost. He was the best friend I ever had in the way of horse flesh. I loved him nearly as much as I hated an old black Spanish horse we used to have. I could have hated him less if he hadn't been such a crook. He would go on just as pretty as you please for several days, then all at once off you would go, in a wild bucking spree that he would go on. I never knew him to fail to throw every man who ever rode him, sooner or later. If he'd just a-stayed a buckin' horse and not tried to be anything else I would have liked [him?] better.

"Old Moccasin John was an old slouch who came to our outfit and got hired on account of his excellent ridin'. He could sure stick'em, mattered not how bad they were if he was a lookin' for them to pitch, but the old Spanish horse throw him too. He had away of hangin' his spur in a horse's shoulder and sort of falling off on one side and hangin' there but he was taken by surprise by the old hypocrite just as we all were. We called him Moccasin because he was so rusty and in that way 5 resembled a Moccasin snake. His boots were always run down, his hat flopped and his clothes and flesh dirty, but when it come to ridin' he got the job done.

"He was just as good at shootin' too. I've seen him throw up a couple of eggs and burst them both with a six-shooter as they came down.

"I've been run over, knocked down, and tramped on by the herd more than once and often wonder yet why and how I am here. I was just thinkin' this mornin' here by myself about an old wild bull I was a-wormin' once, he was fightin' me right along and I was holdin' my hand with him fine 'til he knocked me down. I crawled into a bunch of brush as best I could and thought I was out of his reach. I lay there half stunned as he would rage and paw and sniff and snort at me. All at once he just seemed to go into a fit of rage and backed off

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about ten feet, roared out a big bellow and seemed to just make a leap right over into the middle of that brush and almost on top of me. All I could think of was to try to put his eyes out. As he would horn down at me I would dig him in the eyes with my thumbs and I really think that slowed him down a little, but not enough to keep him from ramming his horn in my side, lifting me clear of the brush and tossing me about ten feet over the brush pile. I just flattened out on the ground and lay as limp as I could, as I was getting weak anyway from loss of blood. He rushed after me but seemed to think I was dead or something as he only nosed and sniffed over my body and walked away, slobbering like a mad dog. That was one of my narrowest escapes and I was pretty weak by the time I pulled myself up and made it back to the camps. When I got back and the boys dressed my side they told me that Will Carver had been shot down, in a feed store in Sonora, as he was buying feed for the Six Ranch where he had worked since he quit the Ketchum boys. He had made one of the best hands I ever saw and we all liked him and was sorry to hear of his death. We learned that the sheriff had a warrant for him and didn't take any chances, just walked in and shot him down. This must have worn on his conscience though, as he soon resigned and we heard no more of him. Will was like a lot of the others, his name got worse than his ways and everything they did then was exaggerated and many misdeeds of which they were not guilty were blamed on them. Like Mr. Tankersley told me yesterday though, we're all just waitin' now for the final big round-up, where it will all be straightened out better than we can ever figure it out here, I hope. If he comes back and I ever get able to ride again, I wouldn't mind going all over the same road again, as in my experiences the good has always out-weighed the bad." Range-lore

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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J. R. Yardley, Mertzon, Texas, interviewed, November 17, 1937.